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ABSTRACT

Designed for use in workshops, this teachers' guide provides advice about the use of portfolios to assess and document students' learning. It also poses questions that will help the teacher focus on critical components of portfolio development. The guide defines a portfolio as a collection of evidence used by the teacher and student to monitor, in a systematic way, the growth of the student's knowledge of content, use of strategies, and attitudes toward the accomplishment of goals. Contents of the guide focus on learners' goals, the difference between testing and assessment, initial assessments, integration of instruction and assessment across the school year, the process of setting standards, and ways to document and chart students' growth. Also included are a progress checklist of things to do and think about in adopting a portfolio approach to student assessment, and a list of key verbs to use in writing statements of goals. A chart of ways to document students' growth describes captions, anecdotal records, students' reflective logs, and checklists in terms of basic characteristics, purposes, what to include, ways to use the techniques, and advantages and disadvantages of each approach. (RH)

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GUIDE FOR

DEVELOPING STUDENT PORTFOLIOS

DRAFT VERSION

Edited by
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INTRODUCTION

This guide was written at the suggestion of teachers who have spent one year using portfolios to assess and document student learning. The purposes of the guide are twofold. First, it succinctly provides key points about assessing and documenting student learning using portfolios. Secondly, it asks questions to help you, the user, to focus on critical components in developing portfolios. This guide is designed to be used in conjunction with a series of workshops. Few people will find it useful in going through it independently.

In developing this guide, members of the writing team thoroughly discussed each topic and attempted to include information they thought would be most useful to new users of portfolios. There are areas which the writing team has not fully developed or has not yet addressed. These include setting standards, involving students in assessing their own learning and current year portfolios versus permanent portfolios. This will be done during the course of the 1990-91 school year as the guide is being used.

We encourage you to react to the critical components and to suggest ways to improve the clarity of the guide for future users of portfolios. We will carefully consider and discuss all written responses.

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Student Portfolios

Planning for Change:
A Progress Checklist

As with any innovation or any new program, a series of steps need to be considered during the period of early adoption. Below you will find a checklist of activities and concepts you need to do and think about.

	In Planning	Progress	Completed
1. As a building staff, decide on your building goals for what you expect students to know and be able to do when they leave your building.	_____	_____	_____
2. Decide on your curricular goals in relation to your building goals. Each grade level should focus on different facets or elements of the building goals.	_____	_____	_____
3. Decide on your classroom goals. (Keep goals to 2 or 3)	_____	_____	_____
4. Decide on ways to find out what students know and what they can do. Formal and informal tests, observation, interviews, surveys, etc. Your assessments should relate to your classroom goals.	_____	_____	_____
5. State expectations you have for students (standards).	_____	_____	_____
6. Prepare materials:			
A. Assessment materials	_____	_____	_____
B. Documenting materials	_____	_____	_____
C. Portfolio holding bins/folders	_____	_____	_____
7. Outline a plan for your initial assessment.	_____	_____	_____
8. Share your ideas with fellow teachers and your principal.	_____	_____	_____
9. Think about and outline a plan of action for incorporating your initial assessment(s) into your instruction.	_____	_____	_____
10. Schedule frequent meeting times with your colleagues to talk about your progress.	_____	_____	_____
11. Reflect upon your plans and don't be afraid to experiment.	_____	_____	_____

1

Name:_____

Your Thoughts On Developing Portfolios For Assessing and Documenting Student Learning

Date:_____

2

What Is a Portfolio?

Portfolio means many things to different people. It might be a log of one's activities such as one used by a pilot; or it might be a collection of someone's best pieces of work such as an artist's portfolio. In schools the concept has a variety of meanings. For some, it is just a folder of a student's writing over a period of time. Some add checklists on which teachers and students check off students' accomplishments.

For this project, "Assessing and Documenting Student Learning through a Portfolio," a portfolio is defined as a collection of evidence used by the teacher and student to monitor the growth of a student's knowledge of content, use of strategies, and attitudes toward the accomplishment of goals in an organized and systematic way.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A PORTFOLIO

- is goal based
- shows reflection between what student was to accomplish and what he/she is accomplishing
- contains a sampling of student's work, projects, anecdotal comments, and tests
- contains evidence of student's growth which has been selected collaboratively

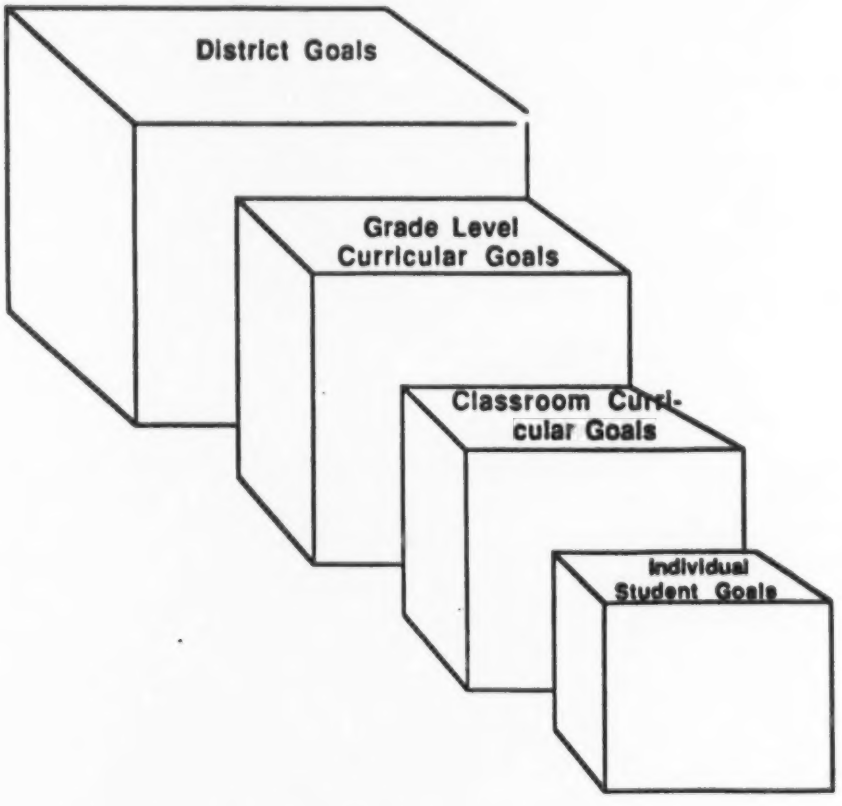
Why portfolios? A portfolio should capture the richness, depth, and breadth of a student's learning within the context of the instruction and the learning that takes place within a given classroom. It may contain evidence of growth in those areas not measured by standardized tests. It also provides opportunities for students to be involved in setting goals and in striving toward reaching them.

What Are Goals?

A discussion on goals quickly leads one to note that the term goal has a variety of meanings. Traditionally, in education, goals are very broad and cannot be measured. Webster defines a *goal* as an aim or the end toward which effort is directed.

Many people in life have a goal. Some want to lose weight. Some want to have more time to improve their skill at a certain sport. If people don't have goals, they have nothing to work toward. If teachers don't have any goals about what their students should know and be able to do as the result of a year of instruction and practice, they'll have difficulty in describing how well students are progressing.

Goals for this document state expectations, are synonymous with outcomes, and are measurable. *They are defined as what students should know and be able to do as a result of having been in a class for one year.* Goals help focus instruction. These classroom goals set by the teacher should be in harmony with the district goals.



KEY VERBS FOR WRITING GOALS

Compare: to cite both points of similarity and of difference.

Contrast: to stress differences.

Criticize: to point out both the positive and negative sides.

Define: to give a clear, concise meaning for a term.

Describe: to relate something in sequence or story form.

Diagram: to organize in some pictorial way--a flowchart, a chart, or some other graphic device--the parts and relationships of a set of facts or ideas.

Discuss: to examine and talk about an issue from all sides; must be carefully organized.

Enumerate: to write in list or outline form; numbering helps.

Evaluate: to make a value judgment, a statement of negative and/or positive worth; requires evidence for your opinion.

Explain: to clarify, to interpret, to analyze; emphasis on cause-effect relationships and sequence.

Illustrate: to show by means of a picture, a diagram, or some graphic aid; to relate specific examples.

Interpret: to explain, translate, or show a specific application of a given fact or principle.

Justify: to tell why a position or point of view is right; should stress the positive.

List: like enumerating, but requiring a formal numbering of sequence.

Outline: to organize a set of facts or ideas in terms of main points and subordinate points; a formal outline is suggested.

Prove: to give evidence, to present facts, to use logic as a basis for clear, forthright argumentation.

Relate: to show how two or more things are connected to one another through similar causation, similar results, or similar characteristics.

Review: to reexamine or summarize the key characteristics or major points of an overall body of facts, principles, or ideas.

State: to present a brief, succinct statement of a position, fact, or point of view.

Summarize: to give the main points relevant to an issue in condensed, abbreviated form, without details or examples.

Trace: to present in sequence, a series of facts somehow related, in terms of time, order, or cause-effect.

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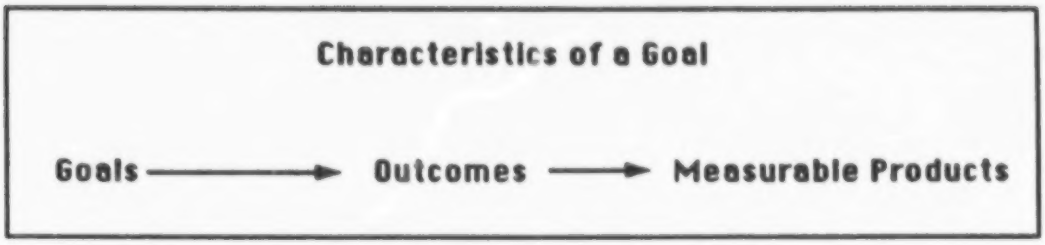
GOALS



Content _____

1. What are the district goals for this content area?

2. What are the curricular goals established for your grade level and content area?

3. In view of the district and grade level curricular goals, what would you like for your students to learn, remember, and do in a particular area? List two or three goals and keep them simple.

4. How can you help students set individual goals?

Name: _____

Your Thoughts about Setting Classroom Curricular Goals and Individual Student Goals

Date: _____

Testing and Assessment - The Difference

Testing occurs at given points in time and usually comes at the end of an instructional period. Students complete a test, and then it is graded.

Assessment, on the other hand, informs instruction and provides feedback to students about areas in which they still need to work. Assessment focuses on the goals, is on-going, and occurs during both instruction and practice. It is multi-dimensional and becomes a broad-based collection of procedures that may include rating scales, observations of student performances, student projects, audio and video tapes, and student self-evaluations.

Assessment should also be interactive and dynamic. It should provide opportunities for students to reflect on and to describe what they are learning. This means that students need to learn how to clarify their thoughts about the concepts they are learning and how to demonstrate their knowledge in a variety of ways.

The teacher's role in assessment is to utilize strategies that will provide information about what students can do; how well they have internalized strategies for learning; and how well they are using these strategies. Assessment activities should also provide students with opportunities to describe their thinking and what they think they have learned. As assessment informs instruction, the gap between goals, assessment, and instruction is narrowed.

Initial Assessments - Finding Out What Students Know And Are Able To Do

Educational research has documented that the number of school days and the length of a school day are not in themselves key factors for what or how much students learn. The important factors in learning are teacher's and student's use of allocated time. Perusing the students' work in the portfolios from the previous year and initial assessments given in the current year facilitate a teacher's learning what students know and can do.

A first step in choosing initial assessments is to look at the tests required by the district in relation to the goals you have set, and then decide how you need to supplement them. To find out what students can do, talk with them, observe what they do in a variety of situations, study past records, and talk with parents. Initial assessments can include questionnaires, running records, retellings, writing samples, anecdotal records, checklists, and content-based tests. You are essentially building a data bank.

STEPS FOR INITIAL ASSESSMENT

1. Determine what to assess in relation to your goals
2. Develop assessment tools. They need not be "reinvented."
3. Assess what students can do
4. Analyze students' performances
5. Organize information
6. Plan Instruction

Initial assessments aid you, the teacher, in discovering what students know. This enables you and the students to set individual goals and to look at growth as the year progresses.

Illustration From One Third Grade Teacher

I needed to know where my students were at the beginning of the year so I had them write. After they had written, it was evident that I had a wide range of writers. Some were able to write compound sentences with quotation marks, and some could not write a sentence that made sense. From this initial assessment, I could make my plans on what I would try to accomplish throughout the year. To keep track of progress, I plan to use individual check lists, anecdotal records, and set up conferences with individual students.

Initial Assessments

1. Required tests in content or theme area as identified earlier.

What	When Given	Why

2. What other tests and/or sources of information do you use at the beginning of the year?

3. Describe your feelings about the difference(s) between assessment and testing.

As a teacher, do you assess, test, or do both?

Would you, as a student, prefer to be tested or assessed? Why?

4. What other sources of information can you use to find out what students know and are able to do in relation to your goals? Remember, assessments should be multi-dimensional.

5. How can you involve students with self-evaluation of what they can do in relation to your goals?

6. How can you involve parents in this process?

Name: _____

Your Thoughts About Finding Out What Your Students Know and Are Able to Do

Date: _____

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Integrating Instruction and Assessment throughout the Year

As teachers, you provide instruction and facilitate student learning every day. Your knowledge that students have grown in what they know and are able to do, as well as students' awareness of what they have learned are basic components of assessment. The awareness and documentation of growth leads to changes in instruction.

Your instruction should focus on content, or what you want students to know, as well as the process or strategies that students need to learn to become independent learners. The content determines the process or strategies that students need to learn. The question that then needs to be asked is how can students demonstrate what they have learned.

During the instructional process, students are engaged in writing papers, giving oral reports, and participating in classroom discussions. Each of these can become part of an assessment of what students know and are able to do. You do not need to add additional activities. Look at what you have already planned and ask, "How can this be used to asses what students have learned?"

During instruction it is also important for you, the teacher, to observe and to talk with students about what they are doing, and how they have gone about accomplishing their tasks. This provides both the students and you information about what they have learned; how they are thinking through the process; the type of errors they are making, what else they need to learn; and the type of practice they still need. Both the students' work and talking with the students become the assessment which is directly linked to the instructional process.

The integration of assessment and instruction evolves into a refinement of the goals for the class for individual students. In this way instruction becomes personal for the class and for individual students.

When standardized and criterion referenced tests are used, it is also important to talk with students about how and why they responded as they did. A copy of the standardized test can be obtained from the counselor or the principal after the test has been taken so

that it may be used as a basis of class discussion. It is only when you are aware of students' thinking, that you can modify your instruction to help students clarify their thinking and to further their learning.

TEACHERS' COMMENTS ABOUT INTEGRATING INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT

Integrating instruction and assessment has resulted in:

- Increased awareness of students needs
- Direction for mini lessons
- Instruction becoming more "child centered"
- Students becoming more involved with their own learning--motivation
- Students can see their own growth
- Parents can see their child's growth

INTEGRATING INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT
PLANNING PAGES

1. In relation to your goals and initial assessments, outline an overall instructional plan for a three to four week period of time.

   NOTE: This should be what you have already developed or that you had planned on developing. Do not develop something that does not fit into your instructional plans.

2. Instruction: Within your overall plan, detail 3 - 5 days of lesson plans of what you specifically want students to learn (both content and process, strategies) and how you intend to teach this.

3. **Assessment:** In relation to question 2, how do you intend your students to demonstrate what they have learned? How can you document their learning?

4. Think of ways you can involve students in assessing their own learning.

Your Thoughts About Integrating Instruction and Assessment

Setting Standards

Setting standards is extremely difficult, even for experienced professionals. We find that in education we tend to be very tentative in stating our standards. However, we know that every teacher has internalized standards. Without standards, you would have difficulty talking with students about what they should have done; putting grades on report cards; or talking with parents about students' progress.

Statements Which Represent The Diversity of Our Thoughts about Standards:

- Goals are only as strong as each standard written.
- Standards are benchmarks along a continuum reflecting predetermined expectations. These expectations are developed through a process of collaboration among teachers, administrators, and the community. Standards can be stated in a statement or in a question-and-answer format.
- The quality of students' performance is determined by the standards set.
- In order to know that you've reached your goal, you must develop a criteria or standard. This standard needs to be developed in terms that are measurable and common to all students. In writing, this may be a scoring protocol developed by a district, state, or testing company. An example of this are the protocols developed for Iowa Test of Basic Skills Writing supplement.
- Standards must be thought about in terms of district, curricular, and individual goals. They must directly reflect the goals, and be decided upon collaboratively at both the grade level and building. They need to be understood and visibly available for students at all times. We must be certain our assessment tools accurately give us information regarding the standards we have set up for our students.
- Standards reflect both the goals plus the classroom situation in which someone is trying to reach the goals.
- Standards should reflect process, knowledge, and a product.

- The verbs you choose to describe what you want students to know and be able to do enable both you and the students to know whether they have reached the goals.

Illustration:

We might want students to be able to explain the course of events in a variety of situations. If we want students to explain something, we want them to clarify, interpret, analyze the information with the emphasis on cause-effect relationships and sequence. For example, we might ask students to explain how something happened in a short story; or we can change the content and ask them to explain what happens when a seed is planted; or, we could ask them to explain the causes of the civil war.

In each of these situations students are clarifying, interpreting, and analyzing the cause-effect relationships and sequence. How well students accomplish this depends on their developmental level, the abstractness of the material used, and the quality and the quantity of practice they have had.

Standards may be established for each of these areas relative to grade level and content.

SETTING STANDARDS WORK PAGE

Use examples of students' work for one of your classroom goals to respond to these questions. As you do this, you will be articulating your standards.

1. What did you expect students to do?

2. What did you focus on when you looked at students' work?

3. What can you say about how well your students completed the task?

4. How does a specific piece of student work fit into a pattern of growth?

5. Was your standard the same for all students? Why or Why not?

Your Thoughts About the Standards You Have and Are Setting

REFLECTING ON STUDENT GROWTH: WAYS TO DOCUMENT

How do you know what students have learned and are to do? When you look at a piece of writing several weeks after it has been read or graded, are you able to describe what the student did without rereading the entire document? As students go through the year, do you know the changes and the growth in their thinking that leads to their responses?

Berliner (1986) stated that teachers' observations of the same event without documentation and reflection vary greatly. This is also true of a teacher's observations over a period of time of the same piece of work. Ways to document student work within the classroom may include captions, anecdotal records, learning logs, and checklists. Each of these provide different types of information. When used together, teachers, students, and parents have a picture of growth over a period of time.

WAYS TO DOCUMENT STUDENT GROWTH

	CAPTIONS	ANECDOTAL RECORDS	STUDENT REFLECTIVE LOGS	CHECKLISTS
Description	• Caption is a brief, written statement that accompanies a document or a piece of student work.	• Anecdotal record is a factual description of what a student has done.	• Student reflective log is periodic writing by students, read by the teacher. Length of writing tends to be about a paragraph.	• Checklist is a list of activities, behaviors, or steps that the observer records when monitoring student performance.
Purpose	• provide person reviewing the portfolio with enough information on each piece to interpret what the document is intended to show. • inform instruction.	• document the process student has and/or is using as opposed to the product. • inform instruction.	• inform instruction.	• Checklists may be used for the collection of data for either diagnostic, formative, or summative evaluation. They may focus on a single event or an accumulation of abilities over time.
What to Include	• purpose of the assignment or activity - what the students were to do and why • what the student did in relation to the assignment • what you can say about what the student did	• factual description of what a student is doing in relation to instruction and the assignment	Students describe what they felt about what they learned: • questions they have, • things they don't understand.	• Items on a checklist must be clear and precise statements that relate to a given goal. • Items should be understandable by teachers, students, and parents to facilitate discussion.

WAYS TO DOCUMENT STUDENT GROWTH

	CAPTIONS	ANECDOTAL RECORDS	STUDENT REFLECTIVE LOGS	CHECKLISTS
How to Use	• Place on a piece of student work. • Write the purpose and what students are to do on the assignment sheet or a separate caption form before the assignment is given: saves time because it can be duplicated at the same time as the assignment. • What you can say about what the student did is critical in planning further instruction. • Caption only those pieces that will go into the portfolio. • Involve students as soon as possible.	• Each anecdotal record should record one observation. • Record as students talk with you. • Record significant behaviors of a student pertaining to how he/she works. • What you can say about how a student works is important!	• Have students write once or twice a week or at the end of an instructional cycle.	• Mark or check off skills or strategies a student is using. • Students may use them for self and peer evaluation.

WAYS TO DOCUMENT STUDENT GROWTH

	CAPTIONS	ANECDOTAL RECORDS	STUDENT REFLECTIVE LOGS	CHECKLISTS
Advantages	• provide immediate reflection on a piece of work. • show what student did without having to reread an entire piece of work. • direct teacher's attention to a single student. • show growth over a period of time relative to a standard. • show student and parents what a student has done.	• provide a factual record of how a student works. Can assist the teacher in developing instruction. • record behavior in natural settings. • direct teacher's attention to a single student. • provide for a cumulative record of growth toward a goal over a period of time. • allow observer to rate the quality and frequency of occurrence of a particular behavior.	• provide insights from students' point of view. You see through their eyes. • involve students in their learning.	• provide the teacher with a quick way of documenting a student's performance. • direct the teacher's attention to clearly specified traits or characteristics. • allow comparison across individual students on common traits or characteristics. • provide a simple method to record observations. • may be done while interacting or observing students.
Disadvantages	• take time to learn. • take time to caption. • take work to be objective.	• tend to be less formal and systematic. • tend to be time consuming. • difficult to remain objective.	• must teach students to reflect on learning. This takes time. • must change instructional habits and provide time for writing.	• must take time to construct clear and meaningful statements. • More often than not, checklists do not include qualitative statements regarding the traits or tasks that were observed.

Your Thoughts On Documenting

Student Growth